

University of Wisconsin- Madison, Wisconsin Union



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Entry details

Entry Name:	Wisconsin Union Catering
Institution Name:	University of Wisconsin- Madison, Wisconsin Union
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Lisa Wadzinske Director of Catering

Wisconsin Union Catering is housed at the student unions of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Our program encompasses a conference center, catering at the student Unions and various buildings throughout campus. Our various menus, artful food presentation, efficient yet effective service design, and polished marketing strategies follow our program’s tradition of excellence to provide premium, quality catered events. With over 3800 annual catered events, Wisconsin Union Catering is committed to the Wisconsin Union’s mission of providing “Experiences for a Lifetime”.

Essay:

Wisconsin Union Catering embodies our dining and hospitality department’s “6 Burner” service model: Hospitality, Product, Staff, Compliance, Efficiency, and Collaboration. These values, which represent the 6 burners of a stove, serve as our guide for maintaining our standard of excellence for our program.

Our program values one-on-one communication with our guests bringing their event’s vision to life. We streamline this process by collaborating with the UW Conferences & Events team, our campus events and sales team that functions as a one-stop-shop for guests. This collaboration allows us to provide high quality events to buildings throughout campus, including the Chancellor’s residence.

As an integral part of campus, we support our registered student organizations on campus with cost-effective pick-up and customized event menus.

Our catering team prides itself on elevating weddings within our spaces by coordinating directly with brides and grooms to make sure every detail is perfect for their special day. Our program provides regularly scheduled wedding tastings for our entrees, appetizers, and specialty cocktails.

From coffee breaks to plated dinners, football tailgates to weddings, Chancellor dinners to incoming freshman orientation, our program elevates every event experience with purpose and care.

Introduction:

Wisconsin Union Catering utilizes a variety of media and promotional materials to engage with UW campus and the Madison community. As part of both UW-Madison and the Wisconsin Union, we incorporate the familiar, iconic branding and design of these institutions but maintain an original, polished marketing design that allows our program to stand on its own.

Our program has also implemented promotional events, wedding exhibitions and Taste of the Terrace, to engage with UW-Madison campus and the Madison community.

Essay:

In collaboration with UW Conferences & Events, our program markets through brochures, websites, and marketing booklets. Our marketing team designs these materials in an artful and creative manner while still maintaining a polished, cohesive design in line with the Wisconsin Union image.

Many recognize our program through the iconic Wisconsin Union Terrace chairback design. We use this unique design on the student union website and materials to promote our program as Wisconsin Union Catering.

Our program's wedding services allow us to engage with both customers and local businesses by attending the Wisconsin Bridal & Wedding Exposition, where we demonstrated our expert wedding services with a beautifully, professionally designed display that included our signature Terrace chairs. We also promote our program's wedding services to potential brides and grooms through a classy, polished advertisement design in the Wisconsin WedPlan catalogue.

Each summer, Wisconsin Union Catering collaborates with local breweries to host an event, Taste of the Terrace, for Union members where we design stations with a locally crafted beverage and food pairing. This event allows our guests to experience the unique dining and beverage experiences that both our program and the local Madison community has to offer.

Introduction:

Wisconsin Union Catering works with the Union's culinary team to design menus that provide our guests with a sample of every flavor Wisconsin has to offer. Our program caters to a wide variety of clientele from our student organizations to formal plated meals. We strive to design unique, extensive menus that engage with a multitude of flavor options and dietary needs. Our program utilizes locally sourced ingredients to provide house-made menu offerings that connect with our guests and enhance their event experience. Our campus produces its own ice cream and cheese at Babcock Dairy, which we feature on our menus.

Essay:

Our standard menus aim to provide a wide variety of dining opportunities to our guests. Our program offers a standard option for all dining experiences: breakfast, lunch, dinner, breaks, appetizers, desserts, tailgates, and bar service.

We offer a selection of conference menus that incorporate variety, quality, flavor, and dietary needs for our guests from all over the world.

The Chancellors residence is a great place to show off our team's culinary talents, and highlight locally sourced produce, meats and cheese.

- Baked shrimp scampi
- Crab cakes with citrus remoulade
- Mustard rubbed prime rib
- Endive, radicchio, frisee, orange segments, grapefruit segments, candied pistachios, baby herbs, shallot or honey vinaigrette
- Roasted butternut and brussel sprout salad, goat cheese and cranberry vinaigrette
- Cantaloupe skewers with fresh mozzarella, sopressata, basil, fig glaze drizzle
- Braised fennel with lemon, apple and pecorino cheese
- Poached pear accompanied a puff pastry tuille and creme anglaise

Our program has designed a specialty cocktail and mocktail menu that our wedding guests love for the variety of color, easy customization, skilled combination of flavors, and outstanding presentation. In 2025, we hosted 31 amazing weddings within our student Unions, with couples giving resounding accolades of their day.

Introduction:

Wisconsin Union Catering boasts a wide variety of artful food and beverage presentations to engage the guest's eye and reflect the spirit of each event we cater. We shape the design of our food and beverage presentation around the different types of events we serve and venues we serve at. With our wide variety of event types, our program has food presentations that cater to every need and presentation styles that take in to mind sustainability.

Essay:

Our Chefs design elegant plated meals served both on-premise and off-premise. A highlight for us this year was the grand opening of our campus CS building, an elegant off-premise event.

Our Chefs were eager to get creative to present our classic, timeless menus in a new, innovative design to compliment campus's newest installation.

- Red Romaine, arugula, grilled peaches, blueberries, sunflower seeds, red onion, honey vinaigrette
- 5oz Tenderloin, horseradish cream, red wine demi, pom puree, mushrooms, leeks
- Mustard glazed chicken, shaved fennel & pickled radish salad, potato puree, preserved lemon vinaigrette
- Spiced cauliflower steak, romesco sauce, seared garlic green beans, citrus herb gremolata

Our Chefs develop a multitude of dietary menu options that do not sacrifice quality for accessibility. We collaborated with our Chef in residence who specialized in vegan recipes, utilizing local items when possible. This gave our program the opportunity to develop more vegan options that are creative, delicious, and beautifully presented.

- Green Salad with Sun Ranch
- Roasted Carrot, Green Bean, Fennel and Spelt Salad with Orange Tahini Dressing
- Harissa Tofu and Cauliflower Salad with Pomegranate Dressing
- Pesto Gnocchi with White Beans, Tomato, Spinach

- Cashew and Chickpea Meatballs, Roasted Red Pepper Sauce
- Vegan Baklava Style Nut Tarts, WI Cherry Compote

Introduction:

In order to provide premium, quality catering service, Wisconsin Union Catering bases our staffing and service design around the type of service a guest requires. Our staff is trained under our program's tradition of excellence to provide outstanding customer service through plated meal service, passed appetizer service, custom cocktail/mocktail creation, buffet design, dietary/allergen awareness, and precise attention to detail.

Our staffing and service are designed to accommodate guest needs for any event, ranging from passed appetizers and elegant plated dinners to breakfast pastries, coffee stations and buffet lunches or dinners.

Essay:

Our program boasts 22 full-time and over 170 student staff. Our team prides themselves on the student staff development of leadership and supervision skills. This allows students to learn life-long, professional skills that they utilize to provide top-notch service for our customers.

Our program extends to campus through our Out-of-Building service design. It is an efficient, quality catering service that can be delivered to any building on campus, including the Chancellor residence. We have hosted a variety of high-profile events such as holiday parties, dignitary dinners, new faculty picnics, and celebrations of student leaders.

Event staffing is designed with the number of registered guests in mind to ensure that every guest receives exceptional professional service. Every year, we host a special holiday event with the Wisconsin Singers, a spectacular student music program, to present a memorable holiday experience. Guests enjoy a plated meal and a chef-designed special dessert while engaging with a live, festive performance of holiday classics.

Our program hosts a Thanksgiving-to-Go event where we package over 1,100 meals that include the Thanksgiving classics. These meals are packaged in microwavable containers to make it easy for the campus community to reheat and enjoy at home.

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